
FACT SHEET: ALBANY SOUTH END COMMUNITY AIR QUALITY SCREENING RESULTS

August 14, 2014

In response to community air quality concerns, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) met with Albany South End community leaders on several occasions and developed an air screening plan for their neighborhood. The air quality analysis found no unusual results in this community. NYSDEC's Division of Air Resources' toxics monitoring program is one of the longest-running programs in the country and ranks among the highest in quality in national performance evaluations.

Air Screening Objective

The objective of the air quality screening was two-fold: 1) to determine the level of air contaminants in the community, and 2) to evaluate if air contaminants identified in the community were a result of nearby local sources or if they were a result of sources that impact air quality city-wide.

No Unusual Results Found

The air analysis found no unusual results in the quality of air in this community. Specifically, the concentration of benzene—one of the key air contaminants included in the analysis—was found to be lower than the statewide average and similar to levels found in suburban and other urban areas of the state.

Methodology

NYSDEC, in conjunction with the community, selected three locations (the Ezra Prentice playground, the corner of Gansevoort & Franklin and Krank Park) to collect samples representative of the South End neighborhood. The samples were collected at the three locations at the same time on five separate days (May 8, 12, 21 and 29 and June 2, 2014). The sample dates and times were selected based on weather conditions favorable for higher concentrations of air contaminants in the area. Working with NYSDEC, a community volunteer also collected samples. These samples were targeted for collection during periods of petroleum odor complaints from the public. After training from DEC, the volunteer took six samples between April 28 and July 6, 2014.

NYSDEC tested for Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) because they readily evaporate into the air and some are commonly found in crude oil and other petroleum products. One focus was benzene, which is one of the more toxic VOCs found in such substances as gasoline, motor vehicle emissions and crude oil.

Map of Albany South End Sampling Locations



Next Steps

At the request of the community, NYSDEC will monitor baseline concentrations of formaldehyde and hydrogen sulfide. NYSDEC began monitoring in May 2014. NYSDEC has recently procured a portable hydrogen sulfide instrument and will develop the necessary protocols to commence a neighborhood survey of hydrogen sulfide concentrations in the Albany South End community. NYSDEC expects to find hydrogen sulfide in the community from the activities at the wastewater treatment plant, south of the Kenwood rail yard and the open grates of the sewer system in the City. Sampling now will provide information on existing concentrations of hydrogen sulfide.